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UNCLAS SANAA 000710

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR NEA/PI

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MEPI WOMEN'S PROGRAM GRADUATES CREATE SUCCESS

REF: SECSTATE 48784

11. (U) Summary: Alumnae of MEPI regional programs immediately put lessons learned to work to advance women's interests in Yemen. Less than one week after Doha, a female journalist won a seat on the 12-member board of the Yemeni Journalists Syndicate using tactics gained in the conference. Political party women who participated in Doha secured agreement from the Supreme Committee for Elections and Referenda (SCER) to establish a Women's Department within the SCER, an important step in their efforts to reform the election law to create better conditions for women to run for office. An Amman alumna held an "Inspiring Women in Law" conference in Aden 3/13 and plans follow-up work that may be supported by MEPI Small Grants. End Summary.

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Doha Alumna Elected to Yemeni Journalists Syndicate Board;  
Election Commission to Establish Women's Department  
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12. (U) Freelance journalist and NGO activist Dhekra Abbas Shamsan Saeed was elected to the 1000-member Yemeni Journalists Syndicate (YJS) 12-member board February 24, less than one week after returning from Doha. She was the only woman elected to the board, receiving the fifth highest vote count. She said she believes she won because of the techniques and skills she learned at Doha, including crafting a message and communicating effectively. She also credits the conference with providing the motivation and belief in herself necessary to run for office.

13. (U) Similar, if less dramatic, success was reported by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) on behalf of political party alumnae of Doha. Effective advocacy by several alumnae and NDI with the SCER resulted in an agreement mid-March to establish a Women's Department within the SCER, reportedly the first such department in the region and perhaps the world. The women are discussing details of the new department, including its aims, structure, work plan and criteria for hiring, with the SCER.

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Amman Alumna Holds Follow-On Conference  
on Women and the Law  
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14. (U) Less than one month after returning from Amman, lawyer Reem Abdullah organized a workshop called "Inspiring Women in Law" March 13 in the southern port city of Aden to examine the state of women lawyers and judges in Yemen, given their long history in the judicial sphere, and develop a plan to advance their roles. Sponsored under the auspices of the Governor of Aden, the workshop drew together male and female judges, lawyers, university professors, NGO activists and ROYG representatives from the Ministry of Human Rights, Ministry of Justice and the National Women's Committee. The participants identified obstacles to women in the law, came up with specific proposed solutions and developed a work plan to generate change.

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Comment  
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15. (SBU) These specific results from MEPI regional programming are heartening for the prospects of advancing women's participation in Yemen. In a wide-ranging discussion between MEPI alumnae, NDI representatives and Ambassador at a DCM-sponsored dinner 3/9, it became clear that the Yemeni women returned from Doha and Amman motivated and full of specific ideas to advance women's interests. While NDI will continue to train and assist the Doha women, Post is exploring a MEPI Small Grant with Reem Abdullah to support her efforts on women in the law. End Comment.

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